

*Field Naturalists
Club of Ballarat*

JULY 1985

EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

Meeting July 5 Owls - Mr E. Mc Nabb



POWERFUL OWL
Ninox strenua

Photo:
Stella Bedggood

VALE ALLAN SONSEE

Cecil Allan Sonsee died on 12th June at Creswick after being in poor health for sometime. He would have turned 74 years of age in July.

Many people throughout the State will be saddened by the news, as Allan was a highly respected teacher whose influence had a marked effect on a generation of young teachers in training and on television viewing audiences throughout Western Victoria.

Allan's life was an involvement in natural history. He was a lecturer in Science at the Ballarat Teachers College and State College of Victoria for almost 30 years, where the emphasis of his teaching was on natural history and appreciation of the natural environment. As Nature Man for some years on BTV6 television he fascinated young and old alike.

From 1952, on the reforming of our Club, Allan was President for ten years and was later elected a life member.

Allan lived most of his life in his family home at Springmount which he surrounded with an arboretum of many interesting species. From there he explored the Creswick district and developed an expert knowledge of its flora.

The fact that Allan was colour blind did not hamper his acute observation and effectiveness as a naturalist.

He wrote only two weeks ago expressing his disappointment at being unable to attend the Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture which he considered would bring back many remberances of Stella, with whom he had been associated on so many Club and environmental matters. His final comment in his letter regarding Stella could readily be applied to himself ---(she) "he was a fine naturalist and set a great example for us all".

Greg Binns.

NATIONAL BANKSIA SURVEY

If you know of any remnant stands of Banksia in Victoria would you kindly ring Gavin Jamieson on 359833 (A.H.) and check with him whether he knows about it and has it on his list. He is the one responsible for carrying out this national survey.

VALE STAN REYNOLDS

Stan Reynolds died in the early hours of Saturday 8th June at Ballarat.

A staunch supporter of the Club for many years, Stan was a most efficient Treasurer for a period of ten years, and recently acted as auditor. His sage advice on financial matters will be missed. Although Stan had been in ill health for some time his death came as a shock to members.

He had attended the memorial lecture meeting on the evening of the 7th June, had been in good spirits and enjoyed the occasion.

We extend our sympathy to Lois and her family.

Greg Binns

THE STELLA BEDGGOOD MEMORIAL LECTURE

At our June meeting we were treated to some of the late Stella Bedggood's slides on a wide variety of subjects.

For those newer members. Stella was a foundation and life member of this club; she was secretary for thirteen years and served as president. Stella was a very keen naturalist and it was my good fortune to make several trips with her. She was more than an average photographer, taking her art to the forest, other places of interest around Ballarat and further afield. She had several successes in photo-flora and had a photo of Fungi printed on the front of the Ballarat district phone book.

It was a pleasure indeed to see her art with the camera shown again, and also a fitting tribute to a very staunch friend of all naturalists, the bushland and all its inhabitants.

We are grateful to Ian Pym, son in law of Stella for selecting and presenting the pictures.

The meeting was again well attended by members and visitors, many of whom were from neighbouring Naturalists Clubs.

L.F.

JUNE EXCURSION

Fourteen members braved the cold bleak day to enjoy the June excursion to the local Canadian Forest. One could be forgiven for thinking that it got its name from the over-abundance of pines in the area! This area of forest is the closest to the city and forms a visual aesthetic skyline from the city looking to the South-east.

A visit to the recent plantings to a dam was made, but we discovered we were at the wrong area of water! The one we should have been looking at is a little further north in Larter Street. Do have another look!

The Mount Clear Technical High School has enlarged a dam near the school and this was inspected. At this time of the year the forest can be rather drab, however, the Victorian Heath, *Epacris impressa* was at its best with long spikes of flowers in all the usual colours. Fungi also added colour; noted were Ghost Fungus, *Russulas*, *Collybias* and *Cortinars* in white, brown, red and yellow. We are fortunate to have such an extensive area of Austral Grass-tree, *Xanthorrhoea australis*, and to a lesser extent Small Grass-tree, *X. minor* so close to Ballarat.

Since the erection of the power grid running through the forest *Leptospermum phyllicoides*, Burgan, has formed a very healthy stand. This plant looks similar to *Baeckea virgata*, the Tall *Baeckea* of Gippsland. Growing nearby were two other *Leptospermum* namely, *L. juiperinum*, Prickly Tea-tree and *L. myrsinoides*, Heath Tea-tree.

Afternoon tea was welcomed when we arrived at a small dam, hoping that there would be some bird activity, but the birds were lying low on this cold day. The area near the dam had been burnt over twelve months ago and we found an isolated patch of Dwarf Geebung, *Persoonia chamaepeuce* and amongst the nearby diggings, *Felichrysum semipapposum*, the Clustered Everlasting.

A depressing sight was an area where the trail bikes are weaving numerous tracks amongst the eucalypts, laying bare an extensive area.

We disturbed some Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos in the pines - we could hear many, but only saw one. Other birds seen were Crimson Rosella, Grey Currawong, Scarlet Robin, and Striated Thornbill.

The habitat for these birds includes the following flora - Eucalyptus obliqua, Messmate; E. baxteri, Brown Stringybark; E. dives, Broad-leaf Peppermint; Acacia melanoxylon, Blackwood; A. stricta, Hop Wattle; A. pycnantha, Golden wattle; A. dealbata, Silver Wattle; A. acculeatissima, Thin-leaf Wattle; most of the wattles had buds in abundance indicating a colourful Spring. Low-growing plants included - Pultenaea gunnii, Golden Bush-pea; P. humilis, Dwarf Bush-pea; Dillwynia glabberima, Heath Parrot-pea; Gompholobium huegelii, Karralla; Tetratheca ciliata, Pink Bells; Acrotriche serrulata, Honey-pots; Helichrysum scorpioides, Button Everlasting; Hardenbergia violacea, Purple Coral-pea.

Thank you, Florence, for the interesting day. We all need to be alert to the uses of this forest and many of us visit this area too rarely.

H.B.

CLUB BANNER COMPLETED

President Helen has completed a very stylish fabric banner featuring the Club title surrounding the Goodenia emblem on a dark green background. It has been made to size specifications for use at W.V.F.N.C.A. meetings.

Thank you Helen - another sample of your fine craftsmanship.

RECORDING OF OBSERVATIONS

The committee has discussed means of recording the many reports of observations that are made from time to time at Club meeting nights. At present these are briefly recorded in the Newsletter but it was felt that greater detail should be recorded for items that may be of significance and of value for future research or information.

It has been suggested that a system of small cards or a "diary" for systematic recordings of the subject, place, time, conditions, frequency or numbers, etc. Should be maintained for use by members. Do you agree?

WILLANDRA NATIONAL PARK - Concluded...

The Park contains approximately 60 km. of Willandra Billabong frontage with a weir near the homestead. Water is an important part of any semi-arid environment, so it is not a wonder that those pioneers created for themselves a self-contained paradise. Mind you, it is doubtful if anyone would do it in this day and age. I respect and admire the stamina and determination of those settlers. Where would we be today without their work and preparation?

The Billabong maintains a fairly dense black box/lignum, rivercooba/mitre goosefoot association along its banks. There are fireplaces adjacent to the water, canoes are available for hire, and a camping ground near the homestead for tents and caravans.

Next morning we went for a 25 km. drive on the Merton Motor Trail track. We saw countless kangaroos (grey and red) and emus grazing, before the heat would drive them back into hiding. We spent a few hours along the creek, observing birds and whatever came into our view. It was quiet and serene until we came across a collection of beercans and other waste!

In the afternoon enjoyed walks in the shade of the old and varied trees. There is a bird list of some 103 species recorded. Many of these species are nomadic visitors to the park and depend on floods, insect plagues or eucalypts in flower.

Wet weather makes all roads impassable, but in spring after good rain the area is a mosaic of colour as the many daisies come into flower - so we were told!

These temporary wetlands within the park offer suitable habitat for a diversity of waterbirds, frogs and other aquatic fauna. On a checklist of mammals are the following:

Western grey kangaroo, red kangaroo, narrow nosed planigale, fat-tailed marsupial mouse, water-rat, and little bat. There are many introduced mammals, such as rabbits, hare, dog, red fox, cat, pig, sheep, goat and cattle - mostly strays.

And so ends our Explorer Tour (1800 km. Ballarat to Ballarat) with a lot of new impressions, memories and photos to keep.

Information may be obtained from:

Park Manager, Willandra National Park,
via Hillstone, NSW 2675

Gretel Manguss

THE VICTORIAN NATIVE FLORA AND FAUNA GUARANTEE

The Victorian Government has undertaken to establish a Legislative Native Flora and Fauna Guarantee to provide more effective protection for the states native animals and plants.

An opportunity for active community involvement will be through the case study. Interested organisations or individuals are invited to register their interests in the Guarantee development program so that they can be kept informed about involvement opportunities as they arise.

Geelong Environment Council is enthusiastic about the Geelong region being used as a trial area.

They are attempting to inform individuals and groups, with local and regional knowledge, of the Guarantee and to co-ordinate a means of gathering a data base of flora and fauna information.

To do this there will be a research person appointed (for a short period) to research club journals and newsletters and to speak with persons who have information of value.

If you can assist contact Mr. Dave King 052 - 795600 or 052 - 593023.

NOTICES

The Colac campout will be on 18, 19, 20 October

Please correct your Syllabus card!

Errata May Issue Page 6

Sugar Glider should read FEATHERTAIL Glider.

Meeting and Excursion Notices

Excursion July 14 - note that this is the second Sunday - Florence Chuk will lead a half day excursion to examine fungi at locations to be announced. It is also intended to visit a Comb Fern site.

Meeting August 2 - Film Night. "Curious and Diverse Flora".

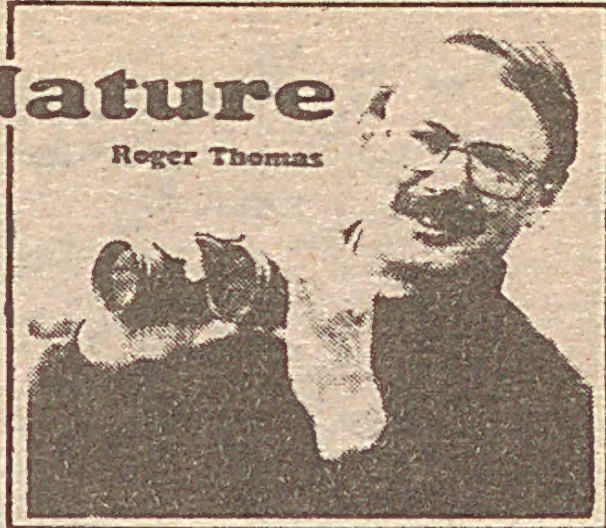
Excursion August 4 - Mt. Erip.
Leaders are Frank Harrap and Peter Fry. Full day excursion.

Excursions commence from Crockers, Car Sturt and Armstrong Streets, Ballarat, at 9.30 am for full day outings or at 1.30 pm half day outings.

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Nature

Roger Thomas



Death of Creswick naturalist

Local naturalists lost the most experienced and knowledgeable of their number when Mr Allan Sonsee died a week ago.

Probably best known for his weekly television broadcasts, Mr Sonsee was an excellent all-round naturalist, with a vast knowledge of all facets of nature. He was largely self-taught and had been interested in nature since his childhood.

He founded the Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat with the late Mr Jack Wheeler in 1952, and served several terms as its president. He seemed always at ease, whether lecturing to meetings, showing groups through his garden or appearing on

television, and was always able to adapt himself to suit his audience.

Although failing health curtailed his public activities in later years, he maintained an active interest in nature and his garden until the end, and eagerly discussed these loves with those of similar interests. He was a wide reader and was always keen to add the latest natural history books to his extensive personal library.

Mr Sonsee lived most of his life in the Creswick district, where he established an impressive collection of trees, particularly eucalypts and conifers. He lived for many years with his sister, who predeceased him by only a couple of months. Another sister, Mrs James, lives in Creswick.

BHL



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